

ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan Report

Phase 4

Western College of Veterinary Medicine

2026

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this report is to provide a progress update on the WCVM's work to align with the seven fundamental Commitments and associated Calls to Action detailed in ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan USask Indigenous Strategy. We have endeavoured to detail the work in each of the WCVM's departments and units as reported by leaders in these areas. While we still have plenty of work to do, this report allows us to reflect on where we are, and start planning for where we need to be. As we 'fly up together' in our college and as part of the University of Saskatchewan, we will use this report as a guide to frame and steer our path.

Reflections Across Key Dimensions

1. WCVM [Strategic Plan](#)

- a. The current Strategic Plan was created and published in alignment with the University Plan 2025. Commitments to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Indigenization are woven into each of the 4 Goals in this plan, though the specific actions or markers associated with these goals are not specified
 - i. Goal 2 features an objective to 'Grow indigenous engagement through research that contributes to wellness in Northern Indigenous communities'. This goal is being realized through two particular research programs, featured later in this report, and contributes directly to the commitment of **Wellness**
 - ii. Goal 3 features an objective to 'Embrace and celebrate diversity and Indigenization'. This goal lacks specificity and clear alignment with the seven fundamental commitments
 - iii. Goal 4 features an objective to 'Embrace and grow Indigenous engagement and community outreach'. This objective encourages

connections to **Stewardship, Representation, Right Relations and Renewal**

- b. The WCVM is currently working on an updated Mission, Vision and Values, which will align with the upcoming UPlan 2035 under President Bruni-Bossio. We have already begun the work of conceptualizing how anti-racism and anti-oppression will be embedded in the new strategy, and as plans move forward, alignment with ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan will also be ensured. See Future Plans section for details on how the seven fundamental commitments will be woven into our updated mission, vision and values
2. Admissions and Recruitment – DVM program
- a. Applicants to the WCVM are introduced to the deybawewin|taapwaywin|tapewin:Indigenous Truth policy on the [admissions website](#) and further in our [WCVM Applicant Manual](#). As individuals move through the application process, they are given the opportunity to indicate whether they wish to be considered for one of the five designated Indigenous seats. If they choose to be considered for one of the Indigenous seats, they are provided with a link to the verification process or, if they are not currently a USask student, to await instructions on the verification process.
 - i. Indigenous applicants who are not applying for one of the five Indigenous seats are further provided with information regarding self-declaration if they choose not to proceed with the verification process (see screenshot below)
 - ii. This aspect of the admissions process supports **Representation and Right Relations**

WCVm Admissions

https://wcvmadmweb.usask.ca/prd/aAdmissions/Equity.aspx

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Application
Contact: WCVm Admissions
wcvm.admissions@usask.ca

WESTERN COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE

Welcome: **cey258** 2025-2026 **BYPASS**

STATUS Personal Residency Ag Seats Contact Education Employment References Statement **Indigenous** PAY Print Log Out

WCVm's Designated Indigenous Seats

Completion of this section is voluntary.

The University of Saskatchewan is committed to equity, diversity and inclusion, and are proud to support academic opportunities for Indigenous students. We continue to grow our partnerships with Indigenous communities across the province and nationally and value the unique perspective that Indigenous students provide to strengthen these relationships.

Indigenous applicants choosing to apply and be considered for admission through the WCVm's designated Indigenous seats must be a First Nations, Inuit or Métis person of Canada. Verification of Indigenous Membership/Citizenship at the University of Saskatchewan is led and determined by the [deybwewin | taapwaywin | tapewin: Indigenous Truth policy](#).

Applicants with verified Indigenous Membership/Citizenship will be considered for admission in their provincial pool as well as the designated Indigenous seats.

Please indicate if you choose to be considered for admission to the WCVm as an Indigenous applicant through the WCVm's designated Indigenous seats?

☐ Yes ☒ No

U of S students: Visit the [deybwewin | taapwaywin | tapewin: Indigenous Truth policy](#) website and proceed with the verification process using your NSID under the "Submit Your Documentation" section.

Note: The "Begin Verification" button will take you to the "Indigenous Membership/Citizenship Verification" in [PAWS](#).

Non U of S students: The WCVm Admissions Office will contact you with instructions on how to proceed once your application is submitted.

The deadline to submit documents for verification is December 15, 2025.

Indigenous applicants may choose not to be considered for admission through the WCVm's designated Indigenous seats. Please respond "no" above.

If accepted to the WCVm, self-declaration is optional and voluntary, and you may choose to self-declare at any time within the student system. It is not part of the verification process of the [deybwewin | taapwaywin | tapewin: Indigenous Truth Policy](#).

Self-declaration helps us support and better understand the needs of Indigenous students. University staff who support Indigenous students' academic and personal success will use this information to develop, maintain, and deliver effective programs and services, and to communicate to Indigenous students. The information will also be used to help evaluate and report on our progress toward making the university more accessible to Indigenous Peoples and improving the Indigenous student experience.

We recognize the importance of protecting your privacy. Only university employees who have a direct role in supporting Indigenous students will have access to this information.

- b. Applicants are required to take 3 credits of Indigenous Studies as one of their prerequisites for admission. [Courses](#) from many 'feeder Universities' to our program are listed, and applicants are given the opportunity to inquire about approval for other courses not listed. It is stipulated that for a course to be approved, it 'must have a focus on teaching the historical context and effects of colonialism on Indigenous people in Canada'. Approval of these courses is completed by our Manager of Admissions and Recruitment and our Associate Dean, Academic. This new requirement supports **Safety, Stewardship, Representation and Right Relations**

3. Undergraduate Student Experience

- a. Currently, there is no active Indigenous Veterinary Student's Council or similar at the WCVm. However, the Student's Association (WCVSA) elects 2 Indigenous reps, one Senior and one Junior, and they both sit, with voting rights, on the college's Committee on Indigenous Engagement. These student reps act as

liaisons between College Leadership and DVM students, and bring forward concerns and ideas to support and improve Indigenous student experience

- i. This practice supports **Representation, Right Relations** and **Renewal**
 - b. The CIE's Indigenous Engagement and Reconciliation Fund is open for proposals year-round, and students are encouraged to apply for funds in support of initiatives that promote learning, engagement, outreach and community building. Previously funded events have included several beading sessions; orange-ribbon tying ceremonies with Elder teachings and prayer along with dancing and drumming; lunch and learn sessions with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation; an Elder-guided trip to the Livestock Forage Centre for Excellence to visit and learn about the bison herd; and others
 - i. The availability of and actions associated with this fund support **Safety, Stewardship, Representation, Right Relations, Creation** and **Renewal**.
 - c. During orientation week, all first-year students entering the program are provided with an opportunity to engage with Elder Roland Duquette and learn about the Indigenous student programming and supports on campus, in addition to the activities ongoing at the WCVM. This is a great opportunity for Indigenous students to express interest in ongoing engagement at the college, and make a connection with an Elder, and individuals in the college community who can provide community and support
 - i. This practice supports **Safety, Wellness, Stewardship, Representation, Right Relations, Creation** and **Renewal**.
 - d. DVM students are provided an opportunity to apply to our Manager of Admissions and Recruitment to receive funding in support of delivering presentations to youth in or around students' home communities over the summer. All students are encouraged to apply, and are asked to indicate if their target audience is 'general, Indigenous or Rural/Agricultural'. For the summer of 2026, 15 proposals have been received and two of these indicated that their target audience is Indigenous youth.
 - i. This program, providing targeted resources to connecting with youth and a focus on Indigenous youth, supports **Renewal** most strongly, while also supporting **Creation, Right Relations, Representation** and **Safety**.
4. Graduate Studies (across all 5 Departments)
- a. There is currently no public-facing information for Indigenous applicants to our graduate studies programs at the WCVM
 - b. There is information about mental health and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the grad student handbook for the Large Animal Clinical Sciences Department

- c. Interns in the Small Animal department are enrolled in a Professional Skills course (VSAC 829). Several hours of this course are delivered by Dr. Jordan Woodsworth, and learners engage with content on anti-racism and anti-oppression, Truth and Reconciliation in veterinary medicine, Access to Veterinary Care and Contextual Care in practice. Many of our interns are international and do not have much knowledge of Canadian history with respect to Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations, so this content supports Calls to Action under **Safety, Stewardship** and **Right Relations**.
- d. In the 2024/25 academic year, Dr. John Harding accepted the first cohort of clinical residents in a Specialist in Swine Health Management residency program. This program, funded by NSERC, included a commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Part of the approach Dr. Harding took to fulfilling this commitment was by co-designing and co-delivering, with Dr. Jordan Woodsworth, a special topics course for the resident cohort focused on topics related to EDI. VLAC 898 delivered content on Power, Privilege and Intersectionality; Racism, Oppression and Microaggressions; Diversity and Cultural Awareness; Anti-Indigenous Racism and Truth and Reconciliation; Faith-Based Sensitivities; and Preventing and Addressing Mental Health and Burnout. The participants in this course found the content to be very valuable to their learning, and demonstrated enthusiasm and deep self-reflection throughout. This course aligns with **Safety, Stewardship** and **Right Relations**, and will be repeated starting in January of 2027 for the next cohort in the program.

5. Faculty and Staff Recruitment and Retention

- a. We have several Indigenous staff members in a variety of areas of the college, and one Indigenous faculty member (Dr. Candace Lowe)
- b. Dr. Lowe has been a part of the Committee on Indigenous Engagement since its inception, and for several years has been the primary organizer of the WCVM's participation in the Verna Kirkness Program and a variety of other youth engagement and outreach initiatives
 - i. Dr. Lowe's work with the CIE and with the described outreach activities supports **Representation, Right Relations** and **Renewal**.
- c. From 2023-25, we had an Indigenous Registered Veterinary Technologist (Katara Chanin) in a leadership position within the Northern Engagement and Community Outreach (NECO) program. Once external funding ended in December of 2025, a proposal was submitted to college leadership to sustain this position with permanent funding. While permanent funding was not allocated, the individual who was in the position was awarded a position in the

teaching hospital, and work is being done to provide release time for her to continue working with NECO during key times of the year, and for her to also continue serving on the CIE as a staff representative

- i. The continued support for Katara's involvement in NECO and the CIE connects to **Representation, Right Relations and Creation**

6. Dean's Office

1. Anti-Racism education for college executive: Following Dr. Muir's participation in Anti-Racism education sessions with the Senior Leadership Forum, anti-racism education for members of the WCVN Executive committee was made available. This programming followed the same trajectory as the material delivered by Dr. Verna St. Denis and Liz Duret, and was facilitated by Liz Duret and Dr. Jordan Woodsworth. Executive members participated in 8 modules in 2022, supporting the planned development and implementation of a new college Mission, Vision, Values and Strategic Plan

- i. This activity supports **Safety, Right Relations, Creation and Renewal**.

2. For several years, the Dean's Office has allocated annual funding in support of the Northern Engagement and Community Outreach program. This funding contributes to operational expenditures for the program, as well as supporting a portion of an Administrative position to facilitate program activities

- i. This support aligns with **Stewardship, Right Relations, Creation, Renewal and Representation**

- ii. The Development team, reporting directly to the Dean, supports fundraising towards the NECO program. Development staff have attended NECO clinics, prioritize discussing the program with private donors and industry partners, and contribute to the development of [promotional materials](#) that share the work done by the program with and for northern, remote and Indigenous communities in Saskatchewan and beyond

1. This work supports **Right Relations** and especially **Creation**

3. The Dean's office contributes an annual budget of \$50,000 to the Committee on Indigenous Engagement. Through the Indigenous Engagement and Reconciliation fund, the committee allocates money to events and projects proposed by faculty, staff and students at the WCVN in alignment with ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan. The committee has representatives from all departments, as well as the DVM student body, a graduate student, and an Indigenous community member. Members of the committee collaborate on initiatives that serve the college's priorities with respect to ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan through the efforts of sub-committees. The group meets at least

once per quarter, and communication between meetings happens via Microsoft Teams and email with the support of the Dean's Executive Assistant. The committee's funds are used annually to support the Science Ambassador Program, with additional funds allocated to provide employment within the WCVM for the rest of the summer for WCVM-sponsored students hired by SAP. The committee also contributes to the Verna Kirkness program and has hosted students many times over the years

- i. This investment and the work of the CIE supports **Safety, Wellness, Stewardship, Representation, Right Relations, Creation and Renewal.**

7. WCVM Standards for Promotion and Tenure:

- a. **Principles:** The College included the university statement on ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan as a core principle of the university and college. In addition, we added the following:
 - i. *The Western College of Veterinary Medicine is committed to the University's vision with respect to Indigenous peoples, which states, "We will be an outstanding institution of research, learning, knowledge-keeping, reconciliation, and inclusion with and by Indigenous peoples and communities."(Aspires to **Safety, Wellness, Stewardship, Representation, Right Relations, Creation, Renewal**)*
 - ii. *As part of this commitment, the WCVM strives to ensure that its Standards for Promotion and Tenure encourage the faculty career development of Indigenous people and equity seeking groups (Aspires to **Representation, Right Relations, Creation**)*
- b. **Teaching Ability and Performance (Category 2):** The College included recognition of Indigenous-based teaching in both the teaching performance and teaching evaluation, and encourage faculty to provide students with opportunities to engage and interact with Indigenous Knowledge Keepers and Elders (**Stewardship, Representation, Right Relations, Creation**)
- c. **Research and Scholarly Work and Practice of Professional Skills (Categories 4 / 5):** The College recognizes work done in areas of Indigenous engagement and acknowledged that there may be other peer-reviewed scholarly activities that could take the place of peer reviewed publications in this area, including written evaluations from Indigenous leaders and organizations. This is reinforced specifically throughout the standards for each of the ranks in both categories (**Stewardship, Representation, Right Relations, Creation**)
- d. **Definitions:** The College included the CIHR/NSERC/SSHRC definition of Indigenous research, as provided by the University Standards, to ensure that

the College's assessment of this work is in line with the university standards in support of ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan (**Stewardship, Right Relations, Creation**)

- e. In addition, during the review and updating of the College Review Committee Salary Review Standards, the CRC added a merit category recognizing work done in Indigenous and community engagement. (Strategic Category 4)
 - i. These changes support **Wellness, Stewardship, Representation, Right Relations, Creation, Renewal and Safety**

8. Research Office

- a. Providing funding for summer student research support
 - i. 2024: supporting 3 Indigenous or Black students by providing matching funding to NSERC USRA
 - ii. 2025: supporting 2 Indigenous or Black students by providing matching funding to NSERC USRA
- b. Graduate Student support:
 - i. Providing matching funding for an Indigenous graduate student NSERC MSc scholarship (2025-26)
- c. Research funding support for Indigenous focused projects
 - i. An Indigenous PhD student wanted to apply for an Indigenous partnership research project; the office provided support for community partnership and relationship building to develop the partnership prior to moving ahead on any projects
- d. Engagement with the NEIHR network
 - i. Office has been liaising with Fleur Macqueen to create, develop and deepen relationships in the college with Indigenous communities. Funding available to support networking events
- e. These activities of the research office support **Representation, Right Relations, Creation and Renewal**

9. The Veterinary Medical Centre (VMC – Veterinary Teaching Hospital)

- a. The VMC is actively developing an anti-racism and anti-oppression strategy with a position statement and policy, in addition to codes of conduct for both clients of the teaching hospital and hospital team members. These actions have been supported by 2 closed sessions, facilitated by Liz Duret, providing safe spaces to share experiences of racism and other forms of discrimination in the VMC. Additionally, VMC leadership attended a mandatory session on Diversity Awareness (facilitated by Liz Duret), and the session was made available to others in the hospital as well.
 - i. This work supports **Safety and Right Relations**

- b. As part of the VMC Strategic Plan (in development), leadership is working on promoting a culture of safety for all, including psychological safety. This is supported by developing pathways for safe reporting of incidents to stimulate awareness, measure prevalence, monitor severity and implement accountability and repair. Leadership will undergo mandatory training on harassment and discrimination, and will also engage with a cultural competency self-assessment checklist to measure baseline skills and facilitate targeted leadership development
 - i. This work supports **Safety, Wellness, and Right Relations**
- c. Leadership is encouraged to participate in Greystone sessions to begin engaging in critical self-reflection and cultural awareness. Leaders are also encouraged to participate in other opportunities across campus to expand their knowledge, skills and awareness
 - i. This work supports **Safety, Wellness, Right Relations and Stewardship**
- d. After the departure of our previous Veterinary Social Worker in 2025, the VMC is actively seeking to hire a new social worker, embedded in the college, who possesses knowledge and skills to appropriately support clients across lived experiences and connect them to resources that match their needs, perspectives and values
 - i. This work supports **Safety, Wellness, and Right Relations**
- e. Expansion planning for the VMC is integrating the need for more space for gathering, more welcoming and comfortable client spaces, and room for cultural practices. Additional focus in the hospital is on priority clinical services that improve client access to care, and learner experience in primary services. Plans include a commitment to address the financial aspect of care accessibility as well, by expanding current emergency funding for small animal clients and creating a new fund to support similar challenges for horse clients. The VMC also commits to continued and expanding support for the work of NECO and other outreach activities supporting Indigenous and other underserved communities
 - i. These commitments support **Renewal, Creation, Right Relations, Representation, Stewardship, Wellness and Safety**

10. Activities by Department:

- a. Large Animal Clinical Sciences (LACS)
 - i. Dr. Tasha Epp has served on the Committee on Indigenous Engagement (CIE) since it began in 2016. As a faculty member and researcher, Dr. Epp has broad influence within and beyond the

WCVM. Dr. Epp's research program frequently focuses on the complexities at the dog-human interface, and she has supervised several graduate students on projects in this area. In collaboration with Dr. Jasmine Dhillon (DVM 2009, PhD 2018), Dr. Epp authored 'The Community Dog Book', an open-access resource supporting communities in defining local concerns with dogs and building strategies to address them. This resource has been used in communities across Canada and beyond, and along with the Northern Engagement and Community Outreach (NECO) team, Dr. Epp is co-developing a companion resource for animal stewardship implementation in communities. Dr. Epp has been a collaborator in the NEIHR network, and has worked with colleagues across multiple sectors to create awareness of and infrastructure for addressing inequitable health outcomes experienced by Indigenous communities in Saskatchewan. Dr. Epp was also instrumental in changing the promotion and tenure standards within the LACS department to acknowledge the value of non-traditional outputs from research, including community-owned and responsive products like the Community Dog Book.

1. Dr. Epp's work aligns with **Stewardship, Right Relations, and Creation**
- ii. Dr. Claire Card now also serves as a department representative on the CIE as of 2025 (**Right Relations**)
- b. Small Animal Clinical Sciences (SACS)
 - i. Dr. Candace Lowe is a board-certified veterinary dentist and is WCVM's only Indigenous faculty member (Norway House Cree Nation). Dr. Lowe has been a member of the Committee on Indigenous Engagement since it began in 2016. For several years, she has taken a leadership role in providing programming within the WCVM for Indigenous highschool students through the Verna Kirkness Program and the Indigenous Summer Institute. Candace's work not only provides critical exposure for Indigenous youth to the breadth of the veterinary profession, but she also provides important visibility and representation, allowing Indigenous youth to see themselves in animal health careers. Dr. Lowe has also participated in Orange You Ready in previous years, collaborating with staff, faculty and students from the WCVM and across campus to learn and take action together in the spirit of reconciliation

1. Candace's work supports **Safety, Representation, Right Relations, and Renewal**
- ii. Dr. Marina Leis, a board certified veterinary ophthalmologist, is now also serving on the CIE as a department representative (**Right Relations**)
- c. Veterinary Biomedical Sciences (VBMS)
 - i. Camiryn Kardal is a MSc student in Dr. Michael Wu's lab, funded by the NSERC CGS-M scholarship. In 2024 and 2025, Camiryn worked with Dr. Wu with funding from the NSERC USRA program, and was the recipient of this year's WCVI Indigenous Achievement Award (**Right Relations; Representation**)
 - ii. Dr. Suraj Unniappan has participated in the Verna Kirkness Program in past years, hosting two Indigenous high school students in his lab. For 6 years Dr. Unniappan served on the WCVI's Committee on Indigenous Engagement, and chaired the committee for 3 of those years, contributing substantial time to the objectives of the committee (**Right Relations; Renewal**)
 - iii. Currently, Dr. Adeleine Leung is the VBMS representative on the CIE, and is engaging enthusiastically with the committee's work, including working on ways to engage meaningfully with Indigenous youth and provide opportunities for youth to engage in a hands-on manner with veterinary science in Dr. Adeleine's lab (**Right Relations, Creation, Renewal**)
 - iv. A faculty member in the department (wishes to remain anonymous) established the first WCVI-based Indigenous Student Achievement award for 1st year DVM students, which has been offered annually for almost a decade (**Right Relations, Creation, Representation**)
- d. Veterinary Microbiology
 - i. This year the department made a deliberate addition to their graduate student program with the seven fundamental commitments in mind. In September 2025, as part of the required VTMC 990 graduate seminar course, Vet Micro graduate students, along with some faculty and staff, attended a cultural event at Wanuskewin Heritage Park. Visitors participated in the Bison Kinship tour (focused on relationship between bison and the people who rely on them as well about the ecology of this important species) and the Art tour (exploring key motifs and features of local Indigenous art from ancient times (petroglyphs) through modern works. The event exposed

students, faculty, and staff to Wanuskewin – a place that Indigenous peoples have visited for more than 6000 years. The goal was to give participants a concrete experience that inspired curiosity and made space for them to consider their reconciliation journey. Approximately half of Vet Micro graduate students are international students who may not have had any prior knowledge or awareness of Canadian Indigenous peoples. The department is grateful to the WCVI Indigenous Engagement and Reconciliation Fund for making this event possible.

1. This initiative supports **Representation, Right Relations, Creation, and Stewardship**
- ii. Dr. Emily Jenkins' work aligns directly and in multiple domains with the commitments embedded in ohpahotân|oohpaahotaan. See 'Program and Policy Highlights' for an in-depth report on the work of Dr. Jenkins and her lab
- e. Veterinary Pathology
 - i. There have been no specific initiatives or commitments made to Oopahotan within the department. While the department aims to be a safe and welcoming space for all, there are no particular efforts that specifically align with the seven commitments. Through the process of reviewing the department's progress, more awareness of the commitments and associated calls to action has been stimulated. The department recognizes they have a long way to go, and that a local champion is needed to better understand and facilitate the department's progress.

Program & Policy Highlights

Dr. Emily Jenkins – Department of Veterinary Microbiology

[Dr. Jenkins](#) is a parasitologist whose research interests focus on zoonotic parasitosis, the impact of climate change on disease ecology at the human:animal interface, and risks to food security and safety, particularly related to country foods, in northern Canada. She has been involved in the Committee on Indigenous Engagement for many years, and works in partnership with Indigenous individuals and communities in the arctic on shared priorities related to her areas of expertise.

Dr Jenkins' NSERC funded research program directly addresses Indigenous **wellness** through assessing and mitigating risks and maximizing the benefits and safety of country

food consumption, which relies on healthy, stable wildlife populations. Concrete examples include a 10 year program testing Inuit hunter harvested beluga for food safety in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, building capacity for local testing of harvested wildlife in Kuujuaq, Québec in conjunction with the Inuit owned Makivik Corporation, and long standing partnerships with territorial governments (in Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut) to address community and public health concerns about harvested wildlife. Dr Jenkins is consulted by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (national representational organization protecting and advancing the rights and interests of Inuit in Canada) and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to directly address Indigenous and wildlife health issues. Most recently, she and her graduate student Linnea McLellan conducted a workshop for wildlife sampling at the invitation of AFN at Wanuskewin in Feb 2026:





[illegible]

A man wearing a white lab coat, a blue and white patterned cap, and glasses stands with his arms crossed in a laboratory. In the foreground, a red jacket is draped over a light blue table. On the table, there are two small metal containers and a blue marker. In the background, a laboratory bench features a microscope, a centrifuge, and various lab supplies. A black metal shelving unit holds boxes, including one labeled 'Bottle Wash Laboratory'. A wooden cabinet with glassware is also visible.



Dr. Jenkins' work extends beyond her own research interests to include interdisciplinary collaborations on shared health priorities. She was on the development team of a centralized resource at USask for Indigenous health, **wellness** and reconciliation. While the initial vision was to create a certificate program, Indigenous members of the team re-directed the focus to building an open resource for students, instructors and health practitioners within and beyond the USask community. This [resource](#) facilitates expanded support for Indigenous wellness as a collective responsibility, and one that should not disproportionately burden Indigenous knowledge holders. to allow a more organic process that acknowledges that supporting Indigenous wellness is a communal responsibility and should not disproportionately burden Indigenous knowledge holders.

Finally, Dr Jenkins addresses **representation** by serving as a Verna Kirkness mentor for the next generation of Indigenous high school students interested in STEM, and by serving on the advisory committee of an Inuit PhD student (through her adjunct professorship and University of Manitoba) who was externally examined by a professor at USask in Oct 2024 who said the following:

Dear all.

Many thanks for today's session. It was accelerating. I think for the first time in Canadian history that an Inuk defended her Ph.D. work with an Inuk external examiner. Hihhi...that is just so fantastic!!!

This Phd student is now a full-time federal government scientist conducting research in her homeland in Nunavut.

Dr. Jordan Woodsworth and Northern Engagement and Community Outreach (NECO)

The WCVN's Northern Engagement and Community Outreach (NECO) program has been working in partnership with northern, remote, and Indigenous communities to improve local health and safety by enhancing the [accessibility](#) of [veterinary care](#) and animal welfare services since 2013. While the focus has been on Saskatchewan, there is ample demand for these programs in other regions. Expanding NECO's work to Western and Northern Canada has been limited by capacity, despite increasing demand from veterinary learners, non-profits, and communities. In 2023, [Dr. Jordan Woodsworth](#) secured funding for a [pilot project](#) from PetSmart Charities, Canada to support the hiring of a First Nations Registered Veterinary Technologist, Katara Chanin. The pilot project, which closed in December of 2025, supported 4 Indigenous communities in Saskatchewan that had not previously worked with NECO, and explored the value and feasibility of leveraging the skills and expertise of RVTs to address gaps in access to veterinary care and community education around dog care in Indigenous communities. While all objectives of the [project](#) were not achieved as expected due to policy and practice barriers, there were substantial benefits to

both the communities and to Katara as a veterinary professional through this program. As an Indigenous health professional, Katara is passionate about working with and for communities in supporting the health and safety at the dog-human interface. Her work on this project supported her to gain confidence, skills and experience in working with communities to address One Health priorities unique to their local context. This project in particular supported **Safety, Stewardship, Representation, Right Relations, Creation and Renewal**.

In 2024, Dr. Woodsworth was able to secure an additional [grant](#) from [PetSmart Charities](#) to support investigation into the phenomenon of inequitable access to veterinary care in Western and Northern Canada. While barriers to accessing care are widespread, some of the most critical gaps are experienced in northern, remote and Indigenous communities in Canada. Dr. Woodsworth's long-term connections with Indigenous communities within and outside Saskatchewan foster trust-based information gathering to generate data aimed at meaningful changes to practice and policy in veterinary care delivery, animal welfare and public health. 2025 saw the awarding of a \$100,000 grant from the [Manitoba Government](#) to 'support community-led planning and activities that increase the health of animals and people, and position communities for greater success in managing dog populations'. With this funding, NECO was able to hire an additional 0.5FTE veterinarian whose focus is on working with two Indigenous communities in Manitoba to identify and test locally successful methods of managing dogs to improve safety at the dog-human interface. Following Manitoba's 2026/27 Budget announcement, NECO has been informed that we will continue to receive \$100,000 per year towards this program for an additional 3 years. These programs and the funding commitments associated with them support **Wellness, Stewardship, Right Relations, Creation and Renewal**. **Safety** is also supported, as all members of the NECO team, including students who engage with our program, are provided with ongoing training and self-reflection opportunities to centre the importance of anti-racism and anti-oppression in our work.

In 2018, Dr. Woodsworth began a program of studies towards a [PhD](#) in the Large Animal Clinical Sciences department. The focus of her work was on community and population health, and took the form of a community-oriented research [project](#) conducted in collaboration with individuals in the La Ronge tri-community area. Elders and youth were meaningfully integrated into the project, and the majority of funds acquired for the work were re-directed into the study community to support the contributions of local individuals. Outcomes of the project include an open-access [website](#) featuring a narrative-format overview of the research itself, along with resources for [knowledge sharing](#), produced by veterinary students, that respond directly to needs identified by community members. An additional outcome is a collection of [artworks](#), produced by local creatives, highlighting the

importance of dogs to the lives and livelihoods of people in the north. This gallery is on tour throughout the province until the end of 2027, when it will return to La Ronge for a final exhibition. This project and its products align with **Safety, Wellness, Stewardship, Representation, Right Relations, Creation and Renewal.**

Along with Dr. Tasha Epp, Dr. Woodsworth has co-supervised several Indigenous undergraduate and DVM students during summer months. These students have gained experience in conducting research; working in partnership with Indigenous communities; and in clinical settings both within and outside the WCVN's teaching hospital. [Individuals](#) who have worked with Drs. Epp and Woodsworth have been [recipients](#) of [multiple awards](#) and [recognitions](#), have been featured on APTN's [Wild Rose Vets](#), and have co-authored peer-reviewed [articles](#). Currently, Drs. Woodsworth and Epp are supporting two Indigenous undergraduate students who aspire to become veterinarians. The experience they will gain during their summer experiences will enrich their applications and provide depth to their admissions interviews. This ongoing work supports **Safety, Wellness, Stewardship, Representation, Right Relations, Creation and Renewal.**

In addition to the work described above, Dr. Woodsworth provides expert consultation services for several Indigenous communities within and outside of Saskatchewan. Most recently, Dr. Woodsworth attended a dog management [conference](#) hosted by the Meadow Lake Tribal Council with attendees from 8 of the 9 member communities as well as others by invitation. This conference provided an opportunity for communities to work together on planning community safety strategies focusing on dog management. These strategies will benefit from federal funding through Public Safety Canada, awarded to MLTC based on an application developed collaboratively with MLTC leadership and Dr. Woodsworth. Dr. Woodsworth also serves on an Advisory Circle for the [Matawa Nations](#) (Ontario) dog management project, funded by Indigenous Services Canada, and has traveled to communities as far as Old Crow, Yukon to share her expertise with communities and collaborators. This work aligns with **Safety, Wellness, Stewardship, Representation, Right Relations, Creation and Renewal.**

Finally, Dr. Woodsworth is one of two primary facilitators for [Anti-Racism Education](#) offered to colleges and units on campus. This work has provided a strong foundation to extend these education opportunities to veterinary professionals across Canada through the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association's [online CE](#) program. This core commitment to anti-racism and anti-oppression aligns firmly with **Safety**, and serves to support the other seven commitments through the ripple effects created.

Critical Systems Change

Opportunities for critical systems change can be identified by determining the system-wide reach of initiatives or programs within a system. Currently, change is happening in pockets across the WCVN and the big shift that is needed is expanding these actions across the entire college. A fantastic example of a potential critical systems change is how we communicate with staff, students and faculty about *deybwewin |taapwaywin |tapewin*: Indigenous Truth policy. If we can clarify the importance and intent of the verification process while also offering individuals the option of having their contact information shared for additional connections, supports and engagements, we can better serve Indigenous community members at our college.

An additional priority with the potential to stimulate critical systems change is the development and implementation of an updated Strategic Plan for the WCVN. By centering the seven fundamental commitments and operating with an anti-racism and anti-oppression lens, we have the potential to implement structural changes that fundamentally shift how Indigenous peoples experience our college. While the focus here will be on aligning with the seven fundamental commitments, the changes that will be made will benefit everyone coming in contact with our college. Given our public-facing work in our teaching hospital and through our research and engagement programs, this has the potential to generate positive ripple effects beyond the borders of this college or this University. Many of the single actions detailed below in the section on recommendations and plans will flow naturally from updates to our Strategic Plan demonstrating clear alignment between what we say we are about and how we demonstrate our commitments in our actions, choices and priorities.

Recommendations & Plans – Years 5-7

It is critical to ensure that the seven commitments are interwoven and meaningfully operationalized within the WCVN. Current work at the WCVN aligns most strongly with Right Relations, followed by Representation, Stewardship and Creation, Safety, Renewal and Wellness. Understanding where we are strong and where we need to focus work in the immediate future helps us to prioritize our future planning. This will look like:

1. Committing to ensuring that the seven commitments are woven into the new Strategic Plan. We will endeavor to centre anti-racism and anti-oppression principles throughout the process while also considering how operational processes support the commitments of *ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan* as we are moving through our strategic plan priorities. This work will lay the foundation for an updated college strategy and

associated policies which will inform meaningful and sustainable culture change in the college community.

2. Implement Indigenous-safe reporting channels for racism and other forms of discrimination, building on the processes already established at USask, with clear protocols and guidelines for investigation, accountability and repair (**Safety**)
3. Widely share opportunities for learning pathways and micro-credentialling in anti-racism and anti-oppression for people leaders and others college-wide (example: [UBC micro-certificate](#)) (**Safety, Right Relations, Creation**)
 - Initiate discussions about the development and practice of these skills in annual performance reviews and supervisor training
4. Expand the college's commitments to youth outreach by specifically supporting indigenous DVM students to connect with youth in their communities of origin during their summers, leveraging the current funding available through the WCVN Manager of Admissions and Recruitment (**Right Relations, Representation, Creation, Renewal**)
5. Develop a cultural learning calendar, open to all members of the WCVN community, and explore providing release time for staff to facilitate their attendance; expand this to include events dedicated to learning about and practicing Indigenous art forms (beading, sash weaving, ribbon skirt/shirt sewing, etc) (**Safety, Stewardship, Representation, Right Relations**)
6. Embed ceremony and artistry across signature WCVN events, including White Coat ceremony, awards ceremonies, other internal celebrations and convocation (**Safety, Stewardship, Representation, Right Relations, Creation**)
7. Develop targeted recruitment and retention strategies for Indigenous faculty and leaders (**Representation, Right Relations, Creation, Renewal**)
8. Develop targeted recruitment strategies for Indigenous DVM and graduate students (**Representation, Right Relations, Creation, Renewal**)
9. Create a ceremony-friendly WCVN wellness space; consider an Indigenous Wellness Team (**Wellness, Right Relations, Representation, Creation, Stewardship**)
10. Consider a WCVN Indigenous Liaison position, facilitating partnerships with Gordon Oakes Red Bear Student Centre and the Indigenous Student Achievement Pathways (ISAP) (**Wellness, Representation, Stewardship, Right Relations, Creation, Renewal**)
11. Consider further support for the development of an Indigenous Veterinary Professional Mentorship Network, in collaboration with University of Calgary's veterinary college, and evaluate objectives and outcomes (**Safety, Stewardship, Representation, Right Relations, Creation and Renewal**)
12. Develop a website dedicated to WCVN's commitment to ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan and associated activities and opportunities, as well as connections to core people, programs and events that elevate Indigenous voices, practices, languages and

traditions (**Safety, Wellness Stewardship, Representation, Right Relations, Creation, Renewal**)

13. Clarify the language associated with the deybwewin|taapwaywin|tapewin:Indigenous Truth policy on the DVM program admissions website. This could be achieved by:
- Providing a check box in acceptance emails for students to be included on a listserv for student groups, scholarships and other opportunities
 - Clarifying that students must ensure they've gone through the verification process, along with language about why deybwewin is important
 - Continue to regularly send out information to the general population of students about Indigenous student supports, along with reminders about deybwewin, in addition to providing information about deybwewin and other resources at the 1st year orientation

(Safety, Representation, Right Relations and Renewal)

14. Consider how best to demonstrate to DVM students the importance of the Indigenous studies prerequisite for the WCVN's program and values (**Safety, Stewardship, Right Relations**)
15. Ensure each department has information about deybwewin, Indigenous student membership/citizenship verification, community supports, and awards embedded in grad student orientation information, graduate student handbooks and/or supervisor agreements. Departments will be invited to include language that specifically addresses anti-racism and anti-oppression in their communications with graduate students. Finally, departments will be encouraged to consider how they might amplify Indigenous voices, experiences and practices within their graduate programs moving forward (**Safety, Wellness, Stewardship, Representation, Right Relations**)
16. Ensure that all departments have the support they need to expand their commitment to and actions associated with ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan. This could be a department champion who serves on or liaises with the CIE, or a department-level action committee (**Safety, Wellness, Stewardship, Representation, Right Relations, Creation, Renewal**)

Conclusion

This Phase 4 report highlights meaningful and sustained progress by the Western College of Veterinary Medicine in advancing the commitments of ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan across teaching, research, clinical practice, and community engagement. The breadth of initiatives described reflects a growing institutional awareness that reconciliation, anti-racism, and anti-oppression are not singular actions, but ongoing commitments that must

be embedded across all aspects of the college's work. Notable strengths include the depth of relationship-building with Indigenous communities, the expansion of community-engaged and Indigenous-informed research, and the increasing integration of anti-racism education and reflective practice within learner and leadership development.

At the same time, this report makes clear that progress is uneven and that important gaps remain. Opportunities exist to strengthen institutional accountability, improve clarity and consistency in policy and communication, enhance support for Indigenous students and faculty, and ensure that all units are actively engaged in this work. Moving forward, the WCVM's efforts must shift from pockets of strong practice to coordinated, college-wide systems change grounded in the seven fundamental commitments.

Central to this next phase will be the intentional integration of anti-racism and anti-oppression into the college's Strategic Plan. This work will require sustained leadership, resourcing, and collective responsibility across all levels of the institution. By continuing to prioritize right relations, relational accountability, and community partnership, the WCVM is well positioned to advance a model of veterinary education and practice that is equitable, culturally grounded, and responsive to the needs of Indigenous communities and all those it serves.

Ultimately, this work is not about reaching an endpoint, but about continuing the journey as a college community toward a more just and equitable future.